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The University of Nebraska - Lincoln Ed.D. 1987

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KINDERGARTEN: ITS PURPOSE AS PERCEIVED BY TEACHERS, SUPERVISORS, AND PRINCIPALS

by

Joyce M. Buckner

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College in the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Education

Major: Interdepartmental Area of Administration, Curriculum and Instruction

Under the Supervision of Professor Darrell Kellams and Professor Robert O'Reilly

Lincoln, Nebraska

May, 1987

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TITLE

KINDERGARTEN: ITS PURPOSE AS PERCEIVED BY TEACHERS, SUPERVISORS, AND PRINCIPALS

BY

Joyce M. Buckner

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KINDERGARTEN: ITS PURPOSE AS PERCEIVED BY TEACHERS, SUPERVISORS, AND PRINCIPALS

Joyce M. Buckner, Ed.D.

University of Nebraska, 1987

Advisors: Darrell Kellams and Robert O'Reilly

The purpose of this study was to identify a selected number of functions, goals, and purposes for schools educating kindergarten children in the Omaha Public Schools. More specially, the objectives of this study were to: (1) determine what kindergarten teachers, first grade teachers, supervisors, and elementary principals considered to be the major purpose for schools educating kindergarteners, and (2) examine the extent of congruence between the above four groups concerning the purpose for schools educating kindergarten children.

The Basic Assumption Inventory was used to assess the opinions of the respondents. The instrument was designed to measure the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding children's learning and the purpose of kindergarten.

The following conclusions are based upon the findings of this study:

1. The chi-square, a statistical test for variance, and the z test showed significant differences existed between principals, kindergarten teachers, first grade teachers, and supervisors in their perceptions of the purpose of kindergarten.

2. Principals differed significantly from supervisors

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in their perceptions of the purposes and goals of kindergarten on more items than from any other referent group.

3. Congruence seemed to be greater among kindergarten teachers, first grade teachers, and supervisors in their perceptions of the purpose of kindergarten than among kindergarten teachers, first grade teachers, supervisors, and principals.

Based upon the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made for further study.

1. Examine the relationship of early childhood education and educators' perceptions regarding the purpose of education.

2. Investigate and compare the actual application of early childhood practices in kindergartens by those educators with early childhood education degrees and/or certification.

3. Answer the question of whether or not school-based inservice programs for kindergarten teachers and principals on how young children learn can influence or move an academic-oriented kindergarten toward a developmental model in kindergarten.

4. Conduct a longitudinal study to examine the impact of a developmentally appropriate kindergarten program on first graders.

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To Dr. Paul Malcom, my unending gratitude for his expertise and counsel in assessing my methodology and statistics and putting up with my endless questions.

Most of all, a very loving thank you to my husband, Walt, for his constant support and patience; to my sons, Mark and Mike, for their encouragement; and to my sister, Julia, my brothers, and my dad who believed in me.

JMB

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> He comes with active feet, investigating hands. In these early years it is the concrete world around him that challenges him--the noisy, moving world of things that he can see and hear and touch. Only later on, with his growing powers of conceptualization, will his curiosities carry him into explorations of the abstract world, the distant universe, the historical past. (Lewis, 1954, p. 18)

Context of the Problem

Kindergarten education is capturing the spotlight of concern and interest as educators, parents, and lawmakers view the critical issues in education today. "Let us do all that we can this year to remind this nation that the time our children spend in elementary school is crucial to almost everything they will do for the rest of their lives" (Bennnett, 1986). Thus Secretary of Education William J. Bennett set the tone for a study group composed of twenty-one prominent educators to assess the current status of primary education in the United States in 1986.

Rudolph and Cohen (1984) stated that today's kindergarten is being pulled in two different directions: first, to lay the groundwork for academic skills by providing total learning through a curriculum based on play, and second, by one that "hastens the child's entry into formal learning by borrowing from the grades."

A Position Paper on Kindergarten has been issued by the Nebraska State Department of Education (1984) that has stirred pro

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and con advocacies by local educators. It stresses a kindergarten program that is much less academically oriented and more in keeping with the needs of five-year-olds as conceived by early childhood experts.

A Position Paper has also been issued by the Omaha Public Schools (1985) which supports the position of the Nebraska State Department of Education. However, in actual practice, its kindergarten programs span the gamut from developmentally appropriate curriculum to a very structured academically oriented program. This is a reflection of allowed differences, as viewed from the district's central office, and the initiative and professional biases from principals.

Confusion about what early childhood education is and is not and what it can and cannot do is rampant (Butler, 1973). Ramsey and Bayless (1980) stated that a major trend for kindergarten programs has been to focus more on academic skills and less on play, without regard to statutory or policy changes in starting age for children.

One reason full-day kindergarten programs have been proposed in many communities is that teachers are required to apply a first-grade curriculum in the program and such a curriculum cannot be covered in a half day (Ames, 1980).

In response to the requests and concerns of its membership, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (1985) has issued a position statement in which the Association has refuted programs that expect children to meet curriculum demands

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rather than programs that are tailored to respond to the developmental needs of young children. Widerstrom (1983) noted that because such a strong emphasis has been placed on testable results, teaching of specific skills have been the major focus in kindergarten programs as opposed to an emphasis on play which many educators consider too nondirective and too haphazard an approach.

More and more legislators as well as educators are focusing on the young child. At the National Conference of State Legislatures, early childhood education and child care was cited as the "most significant new area of legislative activity in education in 1985" (Bridgman, 1986). Ballenger (1983) stated that kindergarten is a time for children to explore their environment and that focusing instruction on the absorption of academic skills shortens that time and leads to the risk of early failure for the young child.

Through research a foundation should be established to help educators make decisions in regard to curriculum for kindergarteners; however, roles and issues have become blurred as administrators, kindergarten teachers, and elementary teachers struggle to build responsive kindergarten programs. Steffe, Spikes, and Hirstein (1976) stated that young children sometimes learn and do things for which they lack logical prerequisites.

Vernon (1983) noted that it is the appropriateness of the young child's learning, and not the ultimate capacity of the child to learn a certain skill, which becomes paramount. Teachers must establish purposes for the kindergarten program and design sequenced activities that lead to achievement of objectives (Allan, 1977).

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Hymes (1973) contended that although children today have a wider range of experiences this does not mean they are more mature or that they need less experiential learning.

In a joint statement of concerns about present practices, Corbin, Dell, and Durkin (1977) stated that decisions related to schooling are increasingly made based on economic and political bases instead of on knowledge of young children and how they best learn. Children need to spend a substantial amount of time and energy in exploring their environment (Fern & Schwartz, 1982).

The need for kindergarten programs to focus on specific outcomes for young children was reiterated by Caplan and Caplan (1983). Dansky (1980), on the other hand, argued that play must be an integral part of the curriculum in early education and preschool.

In an interview, Goodlad (1984) noted that he did not suggest applying first-grade curriculum to four- and five-year-olds, but rather to give them the best early education program possible. "We do not teach them to read, write, or spell, but we do prepare them to do these things at a later age." The years before entrance to first grade are critical for all children (Schwartz, 1980).

The purpose of kindergarten as perceived by teachers, supervisors, and principals has tended to receive less attention in research studies than other areas such as early entry, full-day kindergarten versus half-day kindergarten, or early intervention. The research focus in the present study was to examine how kindergarten teachers, first-grade teachers, supervisors, and principals perceived the purpose of kindergarten and the extent of congruence between these

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selected reference groups.

Significance of the Study

In this study, an attempt was made to identify those perceptions held by the teachers, supervisors, and principals in the Omaha Public Schools regarding the purpose of kindergarten. However, it is possible that comparisons may also be applicable to other urban metropolitan city school settings with similar diverse school populations. Current researchers have suggested that good educational practices in kindergarten are based upon the knowledge and understanding of all involved in the functions of the program. Curriculum improvement is most successful if it can be based upon an agreement of the purpose and intent of an educational level by the major contributors (Law, 1979).

The findings may indicate a need for inservice training and/or the dissemination of information regarding those activities deemed to be developmentally appropriate for kindergarteners and which lead to a pattern for academic success in later years.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to identify a selected number of functions, goals, and purposes for schools educating kindergarten children in the Omaha Public Schools. More specifically, the objectives were to: (1) determine what kindergarten teachers, first grade teachers, supervisors, and elementary principals considered to be the major purpose of schools attended by kindergarteners

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and (2) to examine the extent of congruence between the above four groups concerning the purpose for schools educating kindergarten students.

Need for the Study

As the Director of Elementary Education in the Omaha Public Schools, it was the writer's opinion an inherent responsibility exists to carry out and implement the instructional programs of the Omaha Public Schools. The school district's Position Statement on Kindergarten advocates "a child centered, developmentally appropriate kindergarten curriculum that responds to the diverse needs of its student population" (Omaha Public Schools, 1985). However, upon closer examination, as evidenced by supervisors' weekly reports and observations by administrative staff, it was apparent that kindergarten programs in the district were as varied as the teachers and building principals who taught and administered them. No study of the kindergarten program had been completed in the Omaha Public Schools within the last twenty years, although at the time of the study pilot studies were underway to examine alternative approaches in kindergarten curriculum. The information from this study could be of considerable help and interest to the administration and staff as they consider decisions and directions concerning kindergarten programs.

Hypotheses

The research was designed to evaluate the following null

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hypotheses.

1. No statistically significant differences exist between the other selected reference groups and elementary school principals in their perceptions of the purpose of kindergarten.

2. No statistically significant differences exist between the other selected reference groups and kindergarten teachers in their perceptions of the purpose of kindergarten.

3. No statistically significant differences exist between the other selected reference groups and first grade teachers in their perceptions of the purpose of kindergarten.

4. No statistically significant differences exist between the other selected reference groups and supervisors in their perceptions of the purpose of kindergarten.

Assumptions

1. Kindergarten teachers, first grade teachers, supervisors, and principals have opinions regarding the purpose of kindergarten.

2. There is a need for empirical research regarding the purpose of kindergarten.

3. Opinions held by teachers, supervisors, and principals were successfully identified by the questionnaire.

Limitations

Conclusions and implications drawn from this study were limited by the following factors.

1. The study was limited to teachers, supervisors, and

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principals in the Omaha Public Schools.

2. The study was limited by the use of a questionnaire to gather research data from participants who might or might not have had the same interpretation of the meaning of the statements.

Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the following terms were defined:

Elementary principal. The administrator in a school building which includes grades kindergarten through six or any part thereof.

Early childhood. The National Association for the Education of Young Children defined early childhood as birth through age eight. For the purpose of this study, early childhood was defined as four years through eight years of age. This age range encompassed kindergarten and early entry and eliminated preschool programs from the study as they served children four years old and younger.

Selected reference groups. This term included all members of the following groups: kindergarten teachers, first-grade teachers, supervisory staff, and elementary principals.

Supervisory staff. Those persons designated as elementary supervisors in the Department of Instruction and Special Education Services of the Omaha Public Schools, who by their preparation and certification were assigned supervisory responsibilities.

Developmentally appropriate. Those experiences deemed age and individually appropriate based on human growth and development

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research of young children.

Purpose. According to Law (1979), purpose refers to those experiences which lead to the realization of the aims of kindergarten education. The term was expanded to include goals, aims, and functions. All four of the terms were used interchangeably throughout this study. Gruhn and Douglas (1947) referred to functions as "those elements which lead most directly to the satisfactory realization of the ultimate aims of education" (p. 44).

Organization of the Study

The study was introduced in Chapter I and the purpose and significance established. A review of the literature and summaries of the trends, controversy, and research related to the study are included in Chapter II. The methodology used for data collection is described in Chapter III. The population, the instrument, the design, the rate of response, and the treatment and analysis of data are specifically identified. An analysis of the results and a discussion of the findings are included in Chapter IV. The summary, implications, conclusions, and recommendations for further research are contained in Chapter V.

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CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The review of literature is presented in this chapter to provide an opportunity for the reader to see the breadth and scope of the controversy surrounding the question of kindergarten curriculum. It highlights the attitudes of practitioners as well as researchers in the field of early childhood education regarding the appropriateness of activities for five-year-olds.

Topics included in the literature review consist of (1) historical influences and trends, (2) societal pressures, (3) attitudes of practitioners and researchers toward kindergarten, (4) play versus academics, and (5) early childhood education models. This review of related literature was dependent upon the following computer searches: Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), Library of Congress, and Comprehensive Dissertation Abstracts.

Historical Influences and Trends

Rudolph and Cohen (1984) credited early childhood education with a long and complex history. Earlier historical influences derive from the seventeenth century writing of Comenius in the Great Didactic and the School of Infancy, in which he extolled the virtues and importance of teaching children. Like today's proponents of early childhood education, Comenius sought to profile the attributes and nature of children from birth to the age of five (Mayfield, Dey,

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Gleadow, Lidtke, & Probst, 1981).

Much debate has been generated surrounding the moral nature of childhood. Calvinists believed that mankind was wicked, born in sin, and totally depraved. They believed that this depravity was innate and could be found in early childhood. This premise led the Puritan parent to believe that children were corrupt and ignorant and could earn their salvation only through understanding and Calvinist education. The children were saved by teaching them the doctrines and moral precepts of Christianity. Autonomy and self-assertiveness were suppressed so that children would not be forever damned (Shapiro, 1983).

As Americans began to see Calvinistic child psychology as outmoded during the eighteenth century, Lockean psychology arrived on the scene. John Locke based his approach upon the primacy of sensation in the formation of ideas and assumed that the child's mind was plastic during the earliest years (Shapiro, 1983). Locke emphasized the need for logical and rational education for the young child, bringing about the rigors of discipline to the education of the child rather than rampant freedom (Axtell, 1969).

The idea of the purity of the child's spirit as an inner force for development combined with a religious philosophy of the struggle for unity of man with God came from the Froebelian kindergarten. This emphasis resulted in the Froebelian belief of careful guidance and nurturing that could only be manifested in the element of play for self-development, songs and games, construction with materials that had symbolic as well as manipulative value, gardening,

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and nature study which helped to build character (Rudolph & Cohen, 1984).

Kindergartens arrived in America from Germany. They were started there by Friedrich Froebel in 1837, and brought to this country in 1856 by Mrs. Carl Schurz, a student of Froebel (Spodek, 1978). After 1830, many Americans had come to believe that "the process of education began early in life--between the ages of two and six--while the child was still in the nurture of the family." Here the child gained the discipline over self and will that would lead in school to reading, writing, and arithmetic (Shapiro, 1983).

Kindergartens were established in the Omaha Public Schools in 1892. The Board of Education employed a director, supervisors, and a corps of teachers to insure the ordering of supplies and to carry out the instructional intent of the kindergarten program (Nelson, 1969).

Froebel's influence on the present day kindergarten can be seen in the presence of the element of "play." He urged the free choice of play and saw it as the "highest level of child development" (Lilley, 1967, p. 31). Considered the father of kindergarten, Froebel's theories regarding exploration, learning through discovery, and real-life experiences, as opposed to paper, pencil, and book tasks, are reminiscent of some present-day kindergartens (Humphrey, 1980).

German was the common language used in early American kindergartens, as Mrs. Schurz and Caroline Frankenberg began their private kindergartens in Wisconsin in 1856 and in Ohio in 1858. It was not until 1860 that English became the instructional language used

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in kindergarten, when Elizabeth Peabody began her private program in Boston in 1860 (Cowe, 1982).

Peabody formed a Froebel Society and later a national society which helped to disseminate and spread the theories and practices of Froebel across the United States. Public kindergarten was finally established in 1873 by Susan E. Blow and William Harris in St. Louis, Missouri. By 1879, there were 53 classes and 131 paid teachers (Ross, 1976).

By 1915, 8,463 public kindergartens provided early childhood education. During this time the Progressive era prevailed and defined its influence as social optimism and the choice of innocence over depravity, rationality not irrationality, and prevention not punishment. John Dewey used the orderly sequence of child growth upon which to design his lab school. His curriculum focused on the child's interest in exploring social relations, household chores, family life, and social occupations in a freedom of movement classroom that allowed the children to develop laws and rules of their own (Dewey, 1972).

Freud's psychology added to the growing debate over the function and purposes of kindergarten, as leading voices used his theories of an ideal self and an actual self at war in the child from birth to support their contention that through Froebelian kindergartens they could help children from the beginning of life to face the experiences they instinctively hide and suppress (Weber, 1969). This argument formed the basic debate over the nature of "play" and whether or not it should be "free," as supported by Froebelians, or "directed," as espoused by Dewey and his progressive reformers (Dewey, 1971).

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Montessorism touched the shores of America around 1910, and left on its doorstep the belief that early childhood should provide a sensory environment for the child. Children underwent a process of self-discovery and complete freedom of access to didactic materials (Snyder, 1972). It was, however, Montessori's approach to preparation for academics for young children that caught the attention of progressive kindergarten supporters. Montessori believed that the child could learn elements of reading and writing long before primary education (Shapiro, 1983).

During the 1930's, Arnold Gesell based his theories of child development on the idea that "intelligence is fixed and that maturation proceeds in an orderly patterned progression so long as the metabolic requirements of the child are met." This contention focused the kindergarten curriculum in a direction that encompassed the child's language, social, and motor development (Durkin, 1968, p. 174).

Piaget furthered the cause of those who believed in the observation of the young child for developing kindergarten programs by focusing attention on the cognitive development of the child and relating these stages of development to the curriculum (Shepherd & Ragan, 1982). Sputnik launched the age of space travel and raised the voices of critics in their criticisms of schools in 1957 (Shepherd & Ragan, 1982).

All eyes now focused on the foundations of learning--the kindergarten program. The kindergarten was "jolted out of its isolation to face new conceptions of children and new demands for children's

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learning. The kindergarten came under pressure from all sides to change with the times" (Rudolph & Cohen, 1984).

Societal Pressures

Spodek (1983) cited a number of elements which have had an enormous effect on the drift of kindergarten toward the academic emphasis and away from developmental practices. He credited the following changes as primary causes:

1. Social pressures for early academics
2. Changes in early childhood curriculum
3. Expectation of routine kindergarten attendance
4. New research on developmental theory
5. Use of standardized achievement tests
6. Increased focus on early childhood education training for teachers

To say that schools are caught in the middle of a growing concern over establishing learner outcomes and specific academic goals and the need to provide time for independence, decision making, and freedom to explore for the young child is an understatement (Seefeldt, 1985).

Bruner (1960) highlighted the successful launching of Sputnik, public attention on improving education at all levels, the war on poverty, and the feeling that it was never too early to educate children as the thrusts to begin early education. It is those thrusts that lead to academic achievement.

Documented payoffs like the sixteen-year study of a Head Start Program in Ipsilanti, Michigan revealed that an investment in

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early childhood education would develop citizens who would require less remedial education and would be least likely to wind up in jail or on welfare rolls (Seefeldt, 1985). The 1983 Gallup Poll of Public Attitudes Toward the Public Schools showed concern about poor curriculum and poor curriculum standards as one of the four largest problems in public schooling (Gallup, 1983).

State laws determine when to begin compulsory education. Kindergarten is mandatory in twenty-two states and permissive in twenty-eight, according to the Education Commission of the States survey conducted in 1984 (Pipho, 1984). Nebraska has provided free public education for all resident children who reach the age of five by October 15 of the current school year (Nebraska State Department of Education, 1984).

The impact of positive research of early intervention programs for socially disadvantaged children and empirical studies on expanding and restructuring kindergarten have bolstered the case for early school entrance (Woodhead, 1979). Many characteristics of early childhood programs have been affected by change, including

1. sponsorship, with the public schools playing a larger role;
2. age of entry, with younger children participating from infancy;
3. length of program day, in response to the need for extended hours of care for employed families; and
4. educational philosophy and curriculum, with increased emphasis on early instruction in academic skills (National

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Association for the Education of Young Children, 1985).

Ames (1980) stated that pressure for early entry to kindergarten is based on the idea that the more children who enroll, the more money the state will provide for the school budget. She also reasoned that the proposed changes in Connecticut's program for all-day kindergarten and more academic work in kindergarten are based on the fact that teachers are being required to apply a first-grade curriculum to children and the more difficult curriculum cannot be covered in half a day.

Two Texas childhood educators expressed concern over the increased academic pressure exuded by teachers, parents, and administrators for formal reading instruction in the kindergarten program. Their position statement advocated the need for developmentally appropriate reading experiences during the kindergarten years (Black & Puckett, 1984).

Kamii (1985) noted in her contact with teachers that the pressures to produce higher test scores has resulted in teachers having to defy child development training by having to give phonic lessons to produce acceptable test scores in classrooms of four- and five-year-old children. Collins (1985) suggested that the debate over the superbaby phenomenon has intensified and resulted in the early educational stimulation of infants and toddlers and has negative consequences for later learning. Because many children have had at least one year of early childhood education, kindergarten teachers feel pressured by parents to provide a cognitively oriented curriculum (Nall, 1982).

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Elkind and Lyke (1975) identified the independence gained by children from early education programs as pressuring the need for curriculum changes in kindergarten. During the past decade, major changes in the purpose and content of kindergarten education have been seen, particularly in the amount of reading instruction (West, 1985).

Many concerns and interests have brought about pressures on kindergarten programs. Humphrey (1980) described them as follows: (1) parents have become more involved in preparing their children for future schooling; (2) Head Start has established full-day programs across the nation; (3) television has had an impact on the preparations of four- and five-year-olds for entering school; and (4) the continued growth of the number of both parents in a household working full time has grown.

The Nebraska Council of School Administrators (1986) was assigned to a task force to "research and review the current data on early childhood education and recommend necessary statutory changes." The Council concluded "it is essential that school focus on a child-centered curriculum based on the developmental needs of children. "

West (1985) suggested that the pressures for change are derived from changes in early childhood experiences. She contended that the kindergarten child arrives at school much more sophisticated and better prepared to benefit from formal reading instruction than did a similar child twenty years ago.

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Attitudes of Practitioners and Researchers Toward the Purposes of Kindergarten

Interestingly, Case's (1973) statements seemed to add to the turmoil and indecisiveness of what the purpose of the kindergarten program should be. He described how two completely different approaches to learning can all be based upon a single premise of Piaget's theory of child development. First, the "readiness approach, based on the stages of intellectual development, suggests that when children are "ready," the teacher leads them into activities that will produce the desired learning. Second, the "active learning and self-discovery approach" involves children in learning and participating in spontaneous activities, non-directed by the teacher, and in discovering facts about the world by themselves. "What I have attempted to show is that 'applications' of Piaget's work actually go a good deal beyond what he has established empirically or even what he has theorized" (pp. 114-115). "It seems fair to say that uncertainty, if not confusion and wariness, pervades decision making about content for early childhood education" (Evans, 1975).

By combining the beliefs of maturational, behavioral, and cognitive proponents, social learning theory, and research data by Kohut (1980) on young learners and learning, Range, Layton, and Roubinek (1980) developed several points for curriculum design. It was their contention that before children can begin academic tasks of learning to read, write, or do math, they must be able to attend, store, recall, discriminate between visual and auditory stimuli, and follow oral directions. Rohwer (1971) contended that

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successive levels of early education program contents have not been confirmed by research, and although promising rationales for the selection of content have been proposed, they are infrequently applied.

Kindergartens have been used to obtain a wide range of goals and purposes, from Americanizing children, building proper habits, providing conclaves for emotional protection for children, acting as a holding station for the primary grades, presenting the content of school subjects to young children, and helping to develop learning to learn skills (Spodek, 1973). Katz (1984) pointed out there are two kinds of things children need to learn: basic skills, defined as a small piece of behavior which is observable, and dispositions, defined as enduring ways of responding to the environment, a habit of mind such as curiosity, sense of humor, wonder, and creativity. The task of educators is to assist children to acquire both skills and dispositions. The issue is how both can be done. Recent research (Miller & Bizzell, 1983) shows if educators wish to do both, dispositions should be strengthened in kindergarten and academics started later after kindergarten.

Weikart (1986) challenged policymakers, parents, and educators to resist the increasing pressures to teach young children facts and figures before they are ready, and to focus instead on nurturing their special skills and abilities. Seefeldt (1985) reflected on the purpose of kindergarten as it has been during the last half century. Many persons felt there was no reason to hurry five-year-olds into academics. It was an accepted fact that five-year-olds needed time to grow, learn concepts, solve problems, and learn to work with others,

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with the idea that there would be more than enough time for academic achievement in the future.

Play versus Academics

Play was seen as an essential ingredient in early childhood curriculum since the days of Froebel in 1898 (Almay, Moneghan, Scales, & Van Hoorn, 1984). The first major linkage of research on play to theory began with an interest in the Freudian view of childhood, prominent in the late 1930's and 1940's (Sponseller, 1982). Debate between those who believe "play" to be an integral part of the kindergarten curriculum and those critics who express concern over the low levels of academic focus in kindergarten is producing many research articles as each side aligns itself with research by experts in the field.

Evans (1975) and Spodek (1974) acknowledged that play has been an important part of the curriculum in early childhood education programs since the beginning of the nursery school and kindergarten movement in the United States. As critics have expressed concern about low levels of academic achievement in elementary and secondary schools, questions trickle down to programs in kindergartens, preschools, and daycare centers. One of the most persistent questions has to do with play. "How can the generation in the twenty-first century cope with its problems if they spend too much time 'just playing,' rather than acquiring basic skills" (Almay, Moneghan, Scales, & Van Hoorn, 1984, p. 22)?

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Deutsch (1964) claimed that children who are socioeconomically disadvantaged because of language and conceptual deficits could not profit from a play-oriented curriculum. Spodek (1974) felt that disadvantaged children needed direct instruction in academic skills. There was increasing pressure to replace play with academic content-oriented activities in the kindergarten, as that was perceived to be its purpose.

Defining play is not an easy task. This is mainly due to the broad usage of the term. Researchers have attempted to investigate and establish the cognitive significance of children's play through correlation studies, experimental studies, and play training (Feitelson & Ross, 1973). Current research on play falls into the following categories:

1. Studies to reveal the effect of play on problem solving
2. Play's effects on social and cognitive functions
3. Studies correlating children's play behavior with their achievement in school (Sylva, Bruner, & Genova, 1976)

Garvey (1977) defined play as a behavior which is spontaneous and voluntary, pleasurable, involves active engagement on the part of the participant, and has no extrinsic goals. Glickman (1979) stated, however, that theoretical arguments for play have not held up under replications, and may even have contributed to the movement to increase structured academics in early childhood programs. A recent study of kindergartener's play proved to be a good predictor of achievement in prereading, or reading readiness activity,

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language, and writing (Pelligrini, 1980).

The road that separates play advocates and academic proponents seems to grow wider. In the current push for back to "basics," many kindergartens are teaching phonics to prepare children for first grade and some child care centers are giving worksheets to four-year-olds to get them ready for kindergarten (Willert & Kamii, 1985). Durkin (1978) stated, "Reading instruction can begin in kindergarten, but conditions must be right" (p. 175).

A major focus of attention for early childhood educators and curriculum specialists is whether or not reading should be taught in kindergarten (Ballenger, 1983). "The usual practice of viewing beginning reading as the province of the first grade is no longer viable" (Stewart, 1985, p. 360). "Reading experiences should definitely be a part of the kindergarten curriculum. The question is what form should these experiences take" (Mindess & Mindess, 1972, p. 30).

Throne and McFarland (1985) considered play as an essential element of oral language development and viewed it as an opportunity for interaction and communication. Jalongo (1986) contended, "A full-day kindergarten program is not simply a longer version of the three-hour program, nor is it a watered-down version of the primary curriculum" (p. 155).

Day (1980) stated that few of the studies contained information on the long-term effect of early reading or the value to a child. Many educators shared the belief that reading before

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first grade is not only helpful but essential to the development of the child, while opponents of pre-first-grade reading did not believe that it is of significant future value to a child. Their opinions are based on research and theories of child development. Rudolph and Cowen (1984) concluded that if educators would learn to trust a child's instinct to play and restore play to those whose instincts have been distorted, they would realize the role of play and how it supports later academics.

Early Childhood Education Models

Lawrence (1975) cited how early childhood education programs have evolved with common goals and hypotheses but have differed widely in curriculum materials, program purpose or functions, and philosophies of child development learning environments. These varying programs are called models. Discovery models, cognitive discovery models, and preacademic/academic models are the three categories of early childhood programs identified by Beller (1973).

Informal and formal models vary in the degree of flexibility provided for the child to develop his or her own learning environment and the extent to which the teacher intervenes. Informal models are the least restrictive and the most flexible of the two (Evans, 1975). Evans (1975) identified the following models of kindergartens.

1. The instructional approach utilizes a teacher-centered focus where the developing readiness skills and ample opportunities for skill development occur.

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2. The enrichment approach which encourages the child to be creative, self-directed, and offers many opportunities for the children to express themselves in an environment where the teacher assists rather than directs.

Katz (1984) stated there are two approaches to early childhood education. One is the academic approach, which is skill-oriented, formal, uses workbooks, and has little relevance to the child's own environment. In contrast, the intellectual approach is disposition-oriented and deals with the life of the mind, the disposition of wonder, and provides a context in which kindergarten children attain skills through actual life experiences.

Summary

Historical influences have set the pattern for the variety of programs and purposes which make up today's kindergarten programs. Societal pressures and attitudes of practitioners have led to the formulations of camps of proponents and opponents in the areas of academics versus play curriculums. Research has been used to support both positions without any evidence to support the long-term effects of either position positively or negatively. Early childhood education spans a vast continuum of philosophies and curriculum approaches to the education of the five-year-olds in today's society.

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CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

How to educate the four- and five-year-old child has been the focus of educators and legislators during the decade of the eighties. Because this question was also being asked in the Omaha Public Schools, it was the intent of this study to find out what professionals believed to be the major purpose for schools educating kindergarteners in the Omaha System. The study also examined the extent of congruence between four groups of educators: elementary principals, kindergarten teachers, first grade teachers, and supervisors in their perceptions of the functions, goals, and purposes of kindergarten.

A descriptive research design was used. Because there was no randomization, the design was also ex post facto in nature. To gather data and assess the opinions of the selected referent groups, the Basic Assumption Inventory was completed by each respondent. Permission to conduct the research and distribute the questionnarie was secured from the Assistant Superintendent of Instruction and Special Education for the Omaha Public Schools (see Appendix A).

Population

The population was composed of 57 elementary principals, representing 59 schools, 92 kindergarten teachers, covering 179 classes, 160 first grade teachers, and 14 elementary supervisors.

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This total represented the total population of kindergarten through sixth-grade principals, kindergarten and first grade teachers, and persons designated as elementary supervisors responsible for grades K-6 in the Omaha Public Schools. This number exceeded the original figure cited in the proposal because of the increase in student enrollment in August of 1986. The Omaha School System is best described as a large urban school district of approximately 42,000 students. Sixteen percent of that population comprised the kindergarten and first grade enrollment.

Instrument

Permission to use the Basic Assumption Inventory was given by the North Carolina Association for the Education of Young Children. It was designed and validated at the University of North Carolina as a measuring instrument for teachers and administrators concerning their perceptions of children's learning and knowledge, and the purposes of kindergarten. It consisted of 52 statements to which respondents were asked to indicate on a five-point Likert scale their opinions, from strong agreement to strong disagreement (see Appendix B).

The questions on the instrument indicated perceptions held and sometimes practiced by teachers. The questionnaire supported the belief of this researcher that teachers tend to base their teaching methods on their perceptions of the goals and purposes of kindergarten. The validity and reliability of the Basic Assumption Inventory seemed to support the opinion that teachers practice their perceptions in classroom activities (Howard, 1964). Correlations

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between practices and responses were statistically significant beyond the .01 level and the Kuder-Richardson Formula 21 was .941 (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1985).

Personal Data Sheet

The original data sheet from the Basic Assumption Inventory was modified in the following ways:

1. The questions dealing with ethnicity were eliminated in keeping with the Omaha Public School District's practices and procedures and their lack of importance to the study.

2. The number of years of early childhood education were added at the suggestion of a graduate committee member as a dimension for possible study at a later date.

Other information provided by the data sheet included: (1) position, (2) sex, (3) age, (4) educational background, (5) number of years of teaching experience, (6) grade currently being taught, and (7) marital status (see Appendix C).

Administrative data sheets for elementary principals and supervisors differed only in that they asked for (1) number of years employed as a school administrator, (2) number of years at present school, and (3) prior occupation before becoming an administrator (see Appendix D).

Direction Sheet

A separate sheet of directions for completion of the questionnaire was provided (see Appendix E). Respondents were asked to read the statements and to select the phrase that best expressed

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their perceptions about the statements. They were asked to mark their answers in the following manner:

If you strongly agree, circle space "SA"
If you agree, circle space "A"
If you are undecided, circle space "U"
If you disagree, circle space "D"
If you strongly disagree, circle space "SD"
If you have no response, circle space "NR"

Cover Letter

A cover letter was sent with the questionnaire to each elementary principal, supervisor (see Appendix F), and kindergarten and first grade teachers by way of the school mail (see Appendix G). An explanation of the purpose of the questionnaire was given in the cover letter. Respondents were told a number was assigned to each of the self-addressed return envelopes to facilitate sending reminders to those persons who had forgotten to return the questionnaire. Respondents were asked to return the questionnaire within two weeks. After one additional week to accommodate the school mail schedule, a second note was attached to a questionnaire and sent to those persons who had not responded (see Appendix H). No further attempts were made to solicit responses.

Each group's questionnaire was printed on an assigned color for ease in tabulation. Principals were numbered 1-57 on yellow, kindergarten teachers 58-149 on pink, first grade teachers 150-309 on blue, and supervisors 316-329 on green.

Treatment and Analysis of Data

To facilitate interpretation of the data, a coding scheme

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was established for each variable. As each questionnaire was returned, it was coded onto an IBM Fortran Coding form. A value of zero to six was assigned to the statement answers for statistical purposes. Missing data were assigned a value of "0," and "1" was assigned for strongly agree, "2" for agree, "3" for undecided, "4" for disagree, "5" for strongly disagree, and "6" for no response.

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version 10 was used (Computer Information and Learning Center, 1985). Statistical procedures included factor analysis, frequency, means, standard deviations, and chi-square. Because of the large numbers in the referent groups, the z test was employed to test for significant differences between groups. It allowed for comparisons of each group of respondents on all items of the questionnaire. Chi-square, a test for significance, was utilized to indicate possible relationships and/or differences between groups (Borg & Gall, 1983).

As the result of analysis and interpretation of data done in the original study, 25 of the 52 statements in the questionnaire had been identified as highly discriminating of teacher and administrator behaviors and perceptions regarding kindergarten (Ryans, 1960). In a second study (Howard, 1964), more modifications were made in the instrument and subsequent confirmation and validation ensued. Those 25 items denoting highly discriminating teacher behaviors and perceptions were identified as the functions, goals, and perceptions of kindergarten education and were analyzed in this study (see Table 1).

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TABLE 1

Items on the Basic Assumption Inventory Identified as Highly Discriminating of Teacher and Administrator Perceptions

Item Number	Question
2	Children learn by interacting with people and with their environment
3	Active play does not help develop the child's understanding of the world.
4	The best measure of a child's work is done with achievement tests.
8	Children will be likely to learn if they are given considerable choice in the selection of materials they wish to work with.
11	Adults should make the decision as to the selection of adequate choices for children's learning.
12	Learning must be imposed upon children.
13	Children learn best through teacher directed activities.
14	Children are not competent to make significant decisions concerning their own learning.
15	Verbal abstractions should precede direct experiences with objects and ideas.
21	Learning is best assessed through pencil and paper tests.
23	Children will explore their environment without adult intervention.
25	Given the opportunity, children will choose to engage in activities which will be of high interest to them.
26	The adult is the preferred source of verification for a child's solution to a problem.

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TABLE 1 (continued)

Item Number	Question
30	Children learn and develop intellectually in their own style.
33	Children have the competence to make significant decisions concerning their own learning.
34	Children come to understand the world through active play.
40	Learning does not require active involvement and fun.
41	Knowledge is acquired through abstract and hypothetical experiences followed by the concrete.
42	Making choices in the selection of materials to work with is not highly correlated to learning.
43	All learning is passive.
47	Active exploration in a rich environment, offering a wide array of manipulative materials, will facilitate children's learning.
48	When a child learns something which is personally important the child prefers to keep it to him/herself.
49	Play is not distinguished from work as the predominant mode of learning in early childhood.
51	Curiosity is a learned activity.
52	Children learn best by listening.

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In order to facilitate analysis, the data were factored using a statistical procedure called factor analysis. Factor analysis groups data into variables that are highly correlated with one another (Borg & Gall, 1983). Items fell into eight clusters or factors (see Table 2). Upon further analysis and examination these items were collapsed into four major factors and labeled as follows:

Factor A - Perceptions of how learning comes about

Factor B - The relationship between learning and play

Factor C - Decision making

Factor D - Assessment of learning (see Table 3)

The hypotheses were stated in the null form and a .05 percent level of significance was used to determine acceptance or rejection of the hypotheses.

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TABLE 2

Statistical Distribution of Items into Factors Using Factor Analysis

Factor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
2		.65845						
3		-0.73180						
4					.71975			
8			.75681					
11			-0.45322					
12				.67618				
13			-0.61427					
14								.85344
15				.82585				
21					.74580			
23						.66216		
25						.74698		
26							.69490	
30	.41648							
33			.48338					
34		.48771						
40	.80229							
41	.57777							
42	.76192							
43	.86531							
47		.50547						
48	.83548							
49							.59119	
51	.68252							
52	.74493							

Note: Table reflects highest correlations, positive or negative, for each factor.

TABLE 3

Clustering of Items into Four Major Factors
by Factor Analysis

Factor	Item
A: Perceptions of How Learning Takes Place	30, 40, 41, 42, 43, 48 51, 52
B: Relationship between Learning and Play	2, 3, 26, 34, 47, 49
C. Decision Making	8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 23, 25, 33
D. Assessment of Learning	4, 21

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CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the extent of congruence between kindergarten teachers, first grade teachers, elementary principals, and supervisors in their perceptions of kindergarten goals and functions, and to identify what these four groups believed to be the purpose of kindergarten education for schools in the Omaha School System. The Omaha Public Schools is a large urban district made up of approximately 42,000 students.

This chapter describes the personal data on the respondents as taken from the questionnaire and analyzes the data from a selected number of questions which reflected the highest degree of confidence in discriminating behaviors, perceptions, and actual practices of teachers and administrators (Howard, 1964). It also includes those items, identified by the researcher, of particular interest in relationship to the population studied. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the hypotheses formulated for the study and the findings.

Rate of Response

Of the 57 principal questionnaires distributed, 55 were returned, representing a 96.4 percent return rate. Kindergarten teachers returned 82 questionnaires of the 92 sent for a return rate of 89.1 percent. First grade teachers returned 134 questionnaires

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of the 160 distributed, repesenting an 83.7 percent rate of return. Elementary supervisors returned 13 of the 14 questionnaires sent for a 92.8 percent return rate. The number and percentages of respondents by group are given in Table 4.

TABLE 4

Rate of Response to Questionnaire Sent to Referent Groups

Referent Group	Number Sent	Number Returned	Percent
Elementary principals	57	55	96.4
Kindergarten teachers	92	82	89.1
First grade teachers	160	134	83.7
Supervisors	14	13	92.8
Totals	323	284	87.9

Description of Respondents

The total number of respondents in the study was 284. There were 55 elementary principals, 82 kindergarten teachers, 134 first grade teachers, and 13 elementary supervisors. The number and percentage of respondents by age, sex, educational background, hours and/or degrees in early childhood education, and marital status are summarized in Tables 5 through 9.

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TABLE 5

Number and Percent of Respondents by Age

Age	Elementary Principals		Kindergarten Teachers		First Grade Teachers		Supervisors	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Missing data					4	3.0		
Under 20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
20-25	-	-	7	8.5	14	10.4	-	-
26-30	-	-	4	4.9	15	11.2	-	-
31-35	5	9.1	12	14.6	16	11.9	2	15.4
36-40	7	12.7	18	22.0	26	19.4	1	7.7
Over 40	43	78.2	41	50.0	59	44.0	10	76.9
Total	55	100.0	82	100.0	134	100.0	13	100.0

TABLE 6

Number and Percent of Respondents by Sex

Sex	Elementary Principals		Kindergarten Teachers		First Grade Teachers		Supervisors	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male	20	36.4	-	-	-	-	2	15.4
Female	35	63.6	82	100.0	134	100.0	11	84.6
Total	55	100.0	82	100.0	134	100.0	13	100.0

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TABLE 7

Number and Percent of Respondents by Educational Background

Educational Background	Elementary Principals		Kindergarten Teachers		First Grade Teachers		Supervisors	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Missing data	-	-	-	-	3	2.2	-	-
BA	-	-	2	2.4	9	6.7	-	-
BA+	2	3.6	50	61.0	89	66.4	-	-
MA	51	92.7	30	36.6	33	24.6	12	92.3
Ed.D.	2	3.6	-	-	-	-	1	7.7
Total	55	100.0	82	100.0	134	100.0	13	100.0

TABLE 8

Number and Percentage of Respondents with Hours or Degree in Early Childhood Education

Hours/Degree	Elementary Principals		Kindergarten Teachers		First Grade Teachers		Supervisors	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Missing data	-	-	-	-	3	2.2	-	-
None	26	47.3	34	41.5	60	44.8	3	23.1
Some hours	28	50.9	20	24.4	45	33.6	9	69.2
BA	-	-	19	23.2	19	14.2	-	-
MA	1	1.8	9	11.0	7	5.2	1	7.7
Total	55	100.0	82	100.0	134	100.0	13	100.0

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TABLE 9

Number and Percentage of Respondents by Marital Status

Marital Status	Elementary Principals		Kindergarten Teachers		First Grade Teachers		Supervisors	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Missing data	-	-	1	1.2	3	2.2	-	-
Single	5	9.1	19	23.2	30	22.4	2	15.4
Married	41	74.5	51	62.2	92	68.7	9	69.2
Separated	1	1.8	-	-	-	-	-	-
Divorced	8	14.5	11	13.4	9	6.7	2	15.4
Total	55	100.0	82	100.0	134	100.0	13	100.0

Elementary Principals

The elementary principals ranged in age from 31 to over 40 years of age, with 78.2 percent in the over 40 bracket. Males made up 36.4 percent of this group. Principals averaged 12.9 years of administrative experience. Their educational background reflected that 92.7 percent had their master's, with 3.6 percent having earned a doctorate. One elementary principal had a master's degree in early childhood education, while 50.9 percent had some early childhood hours.

Kindergarten Teachers

Approximately 41 percent of the kindergarten teachers did not have any training in early childhood education. Teachers with undergraduate degrees in early childhood education numbered 23.2

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percent while 24.4 percent had some coursework in early childhood education. Fifty percent of the kindergarten respondents were over 40 years of age. The average number of years of teaching experience of the kindergarten teachers was 14.3. A total of 62.2 percent of the kindergarten teachers were married and 23.2 percent were single.

First Grade Teachers

All of the first grade teachers in the study were female. They averaged 13.9 years of teaching experience. The median age level was between 36 and 40 years. A total of 66.4 percent of the first grade teachers had a bachelor of arts degree and some graduate hours and 24.6 percent held master's degrees. Only 14.2 percent had a bachelor's degree in early childhood education and 5.2 percent had a master's degree in early childhood education; 44.8 percent had taken no coursework in early childhood education. Approximately 69 percent of the first grade teachers were married, 22.4 percent were single, and 6.7 percent were divorced.

Supervisors

Supervisors primarily responsible for instruction in grade kindergarten through sixth grade averaged 6.4 percent in years of supervisory experience. The mean age of the supervisors was 38.3 years. No supervisors had less than a master's degree and 7.7 percent had a doctorate. A total of 23.1 percent of the supervisors had taken no early childhood education coursework while 69.2 percent

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had taken some hours of coursework in early childhood education. Approximately 15 percent were single and 15.4 percent were divorced. Of the 13 respondents, 15.4 percent were male.

Statistical Results

The means and standard deviations for each referent group in regard to Factors A, B, C, and D and items of significant differences are shown in Table 10. Items which reflected unusually high means, either in agreement or disagreement by all four referent groups, were identified as important perceptions regarding education in the kindergarten. For example, the consistently high statistical means for item 47 which asked respondents if active exploration in a rich environment that offered a wide array of manipulative materials would facilitate children's learning indicated strong agreement among the four groups. The idea that kindergarten should provide opportunities for exploration and discovery was seen as an important element in educating kindergarteners. On the other hand, elementary principals, kindergarten teachers, first grade teachers, and supervisors all strongly disagreed with item 21. Assessing learning through pencil and paper tests was not identified as a purpose or goal for kindergarten by any of the referent groups.

A summary of the items which showed significant differences among the referent groups is presented in Table 11. These items were those which were identified as highly discriminating the perceptions of teachers and administrators with regard to the purposes and goals of kindergraten. They also reflect statistically

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TABLE 10

Summary of Means and Standard Deviations by Referent Groups

Item	Elementary Principals		Kindergarten Teachers		First Grade Teachers		Supervisors	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Factor A								
30	1.836	.631	1.939	.947	1.866	.802	2.077	.760
40	4.218	1.013	4.207	1.245	3.993	1.295	4.615	.506
41	3.709	1.286	3.707	1.470	3.328	1.491	4.077	1.256
42	3.964	.838	4.000	1.111	3.851	1.283	4.231	.927
43	4.509	.605	4.341	1.080	4.224	1.260	4.769	.439
48	4.327	.511	3.988	1.024	3.873	1.294	4.462	.519
51	3.782	1.257	3.476	1.354	3.575	1.395	4.231	1.013
52	4.036	1.053	4.049	1.175	3.649	1.345	4.462	.519
Factor B								
2	1.200	.447	1.171	.379	1.328	.471	1.308	.480
3	4.255	1.058	4.671	.589	4.590	.591	4.615	.506
26	2.927	1.425	3.354	1.364	3.104	1.252	3.692	.855
34	2.200	.931	1.732	1.066	1.978	.969	1.692	.480
47	1.564	.570	1.488	.741	1.642	.921	1.077	.277
49	2.600	1.409	3.988	1.024	2.582	1.442	2.385	1.044
Factor C								
11	2.836	1.385	2.939	1.318	2.597	1.145	3.231	1.301
12	3.636	1.282	3.927	1.142	3.545	1.296	4.385	.506
13	2.564	1.151	3.671	1.176	3.067	1.165	3.308	1.109
14	3.800	1.112	3.841	.895	3.560	1.141	4.385	.768
15	3.327	1.306	3.646	1.337	3.537	1.324	4.231	.927
18	2.345	.947	2.195	.895	2.522	1.060	2.000	.831
23	2.055	.803	2.268	.982	2.373	.890	2.231	.831
25	1.673	.546	1.805	.637	1.903	.875	1.923	.494
33	2.673	1.187	2.622	1.203	2.843	1.331	2.308	.947
Factor D								
4	3.800	1.161	4.451	.788	4.291	1.010	4.231	.439
21	4.218	.875	4.476	.741	4.381	.754	4.385	.650

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TABLE 11

Comparisons of Items of Significant Differences by Referent Groups

Factor/Item	Elementary Principals		Kindergarten Teachers		First Grade Teachers		Supervisors	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
A. Perception of How Learning Takes Place								
52	4.036	1.053	4.049	1.175	3.649	1.345	4.462	.519
B. Relationship between Learning and Play								
2	1.200	.447	1.171	.379	1.328	.471	1.308	.480
3	4.255	1.058	4.671	.589	4.590	.591	4.615	.506
26	2.927	1.425	3.354	1.364	3.104	1.252	3.692	.855
34	2.200	.931	1.732	1.066	1.978	.969	1.692	.480
47	1.564	.570	1.488	.741	1.642	.921	1.077	.277
C. Decision Making								
12	3.636	1.282	3.927	1.142	3.545	1.296	4.385	.506
13	2.564	1.151	3.671	1.176	3.067	1.165	3.308	1.109
33	2.673	1.187	2.622	1.203	2.843	1.331	2.308	.947
D. Assessment of Learning								
4	3.800	1.161	4.451	.788	4.291	1.010	4.231	.439

those items which had a high level of significance.

Item 52, children learn by listening, resulted in a significant difference between first grade teachers and supervisors. First grade teachers were also significantly different from kindergarten teachers. Item 52 was the only item in Factor A, perceptions on how learning takes place, which showed a significant difference between any two groups (see Table 12).

Factor B, relationships between learning and play, produced the most items of significant differences. Five of the six items, excluding item 49, showed significant differences. Item 3, active play does not help develop the child's understanding, reflected a significant difference between principals and kindergarten teachers. Principals also differed significantly from first grade teachers and supervisors. Children come to understand the world through play, item 34, was significant at the .0117 level. Principals differed significantly from both kindergarten teachers and supervisors.

Item 2, children learn by interacting with people, reflected a significant difference between kindergarten and first grade teachers. No significant differences existed between the other referent groups on this item. The means for principals and supervisors on item 47, active exploration in a rich environment will facilitate children's learning, yielded a significant difference. Supervisors also differed significantly from kindergarten and first grade teachers.

The chi-square and z test scores indicated a significant difference for item 26, the adult is the preferred source of

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TABLE 12

Significant Differences Between Referent Groups
(Z Test Scores < 1.96)

Factor	Item	Principals/ Kindergarten Teachers	Principals/ First Grade Teachers	Elementary Principals/ Supervisors	Kindergarten/ First Grade Teachers	Kindergarten Teachers/ Supervisors	First Grade Teachers/ Supervisors
A	30	-	-	-	-	-	-
	40	-	-	2.01	-	2.07	3.42
	41	-	-	-	-	-	2.02
	42	-	-	-	-	-	-
	43	-	2.07	-	-	2.51	3.32
	48	2.53	3.38	-	-	2.57	3.19
	51	-	-	-	-	2.38	2.14
	52	-	2.10	2.10	2.27	2.12	4.35
B	2	-	-	-	2.48	-	-
	3	2.69	2.21	-	-	-	-
	26	-	-	2.51	-	-	2.25
	34	2.70	-	2.75	-	-	-
	47	-	-	4.45	-	3.61	5.16
	49	6.27	-	-	8.26	5.15	-
C	8	-	-	-	2.44	-	2.83
	11	-	-	-	-	-	-
	12	-	-	3.35	2.24	2.41	4.62
	13	5.47	2.73	2.16	3.68	-	-
	14	-	-	2.24	1.99	2.32	3.52
	15	-	-	2.90	-	1.97	2.47
	23	-	2.37	-	-	-	-
	25	-	2.19	-	-	-	-
	33	-	-	-	-	-	-

TABLE 12 (continued)

Factor	Item	Principals/ Kindergarten Teachers	Principals/ First Grade Teachers	Elementary Principals/ Supervisors	Kindergarten/ First Grade Teachers	Kindergarten Teachers/ Supervisors	First Grade Teachers/ Supervisors
D	4	3.58	2.70	2.16	-	-	-
	21	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note: Only those items (1) which were deemed as discriminating of referent group perceptions in the questionnaire and (2) which showed the most significant differences between referent groups were discussed.

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verification for a child's solution to a problem, at the .0286 level. The other two referent groups also differed significantly with principals on this item. Significant differences also existed between first grade teachers and supervisors. First grade teachers and kindergarten teachers were not significantly different from each other.

Decision making, Factor C, produced three items which showed significant differences. Item 12, learning must be imposed on children, item 13, children learn best through teacher directed activities, and item 33, children have the competence to make significant decisions concerning their own learning, produced significant z test scores.

First grade teachers differed significantly from supervisors on item 12. Significant differences also existed between supervisors and the other referent groups. On item 13, principals differed significantly from kindergarten teachers, first grade teachers, and supervisors. Kindergarten teachers differed significantly on this item from first grade teachers. Item 33 showed a .0118 level of significance between the four referent groups.

Assessment of learning, Factor D, only showed one item in the cluster with significant differences among the referent groups. Item 4, the best measure of a child's work is done with achievement tests, showed a .0264 level of significance. Principals differed significantly from kindergarten teachers, first grade teachers and supervisors.

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Hypotheses

Hypothesis One. No statistically significant differences exist between the other selected reference groups and elementary school principals in their perceptions of the purpose of kindergarten.

Significant differences existed between the other reference groups and principals on items 3, 4, 12, 13, 26, 34, 47, 49, and 52. In summary, Factors A, B, C, and D contained items which showed significant differences as reflected by z test scores beyond 1.96 (see Table 12) between principals and kindergarten teachers, principals and first grade teachers, and principals and supervisors. The null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis Two. No statistically significant differences exist between the other selected reference groups and kindergarten teachers in their perceptions of the purpose of kindergarten.

Kindergarten teachers differed significantly from the other referent groups on items 2, 3, 4, 12, 13, 34, 47, and 52. The null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis Three. No statistically significant differences exist between the other selected reference groups and first grade teachers in their perceptions of the purpose of kindergarten.

First grade teachers differed significantly from other referent groups on item 52, Factor A, perceptions on how learning takes place; on items 2, 3, 26, and 47, Factor B, the relationship between learning and play; on items 12, 13, and 33, Factor C, decision

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making; and on item 4, Factor D, assessment of learning. The null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis Four. No statistically significant differences exist between the other selected reference groups and supervisors in their perceptions of the purpose of kindergarten.

Supervisors differed significantly from other referent groups on items 4, 12, 13, 26, 47, and 52. The null hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Further investigation identified the following items with a level of significance that reflected the perceptions of principals, supervisors, kindergarten teachers, and first grade teachers as to what might be the purpose and goals of kindergarten education; in addition, further investigation gave possible evidence of congruence between the groups.

Approximately 98 percent of the respondents in all four referent groups strongly agreed with item 2, children learn by interacting, and item 47, active exploration facilitates learning. Item 3, active play does not help develop the child's understanding, showed strong disagreement by all referent groups; 9.1 percent of the principals indicated agreement with the statement. The respondents strongly agreed with item 34, children come to understand through active play; principals reflected the most disagreement and indecision regarding this item. The perceptions of the respondent groups seemed to range from strongly agree to strongly disagree in their responses to items

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in Factor B.

Factor A, perceptions on how learning takes place focused on item 52, children learn best by listening. Some agreement, although under 10 percent, was reflected by principals and first grade teachers. The concept was rejected by 100 percent of the supervisors and approximately 93 percent of the kindergarten teachers were in disagreement.

Items in Factor C, decision making, which showed significant differences among referent groups were 12, 13, and 33. Eighteen percent of the principals agreed, 12 percent were undecided, and 63 percent were in disagreement with item 12. Of the first grade teachers, 24 percent were in agreement, 13 percent were undecided, and 52 percent were in disagreement. Supervisors again reflected 100 percent disagreement with item 12.

Item 13, children learn best through teacher directed activities, reflected a split in agreement by supervisors; 38.5 percent agreed whereas 60 percent disagreed. Principals and first grade teachers also showed a wide range in their responses between agreement and disagreement; 64 percent of the kindergarten teachers disagreed with item 13 and 11 percent were undecided.

Principals and first grade teachers reflected 25 and 29 percent disagreement, respectively, for item 33, children have the competence to make significant decisions. Fifty percent of the kindergarten teachers and 53 percent of the supervisors were in agreement. More than 20 percent of the kindergarten teachers and first grade teachers were undecided on this item.

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Factor D, assessment of learning, highlighted item 4, the best measure of a child's work is done with achievement tests. All four referent groups indicated strong disagreement on this item. Three to four percent of each group were in agreement. A summary of the data is reflected in Table 13.

The extent of congruence between the groups vacillated from issue to issue. First grade teachers and elementary principals seemed to be more closely aligned in their perceptions on items which related to the relationship of learning to play; therefore allowing some conjecture that there might be reservation on their parts as to the importance of play in the kindergarten. Kindergarten teachers and supervisors, however, seemed to lean more positively toward the importance of play to learning.

Questions which focused on teacher/adult-directed activities and child-centered or child-initiated activities seemed to cause supervisors the most ambivalence. As a group they tended to cluster in agreement on most issues regarding the goals and purposes of education in the kindergarten.

The findings of this study support the indecisiveness of what the purpose of the kindergarten program should be as reflected in the study by Case (1973). He illustrated how both teacher-directed and student-directed practices were based on the same Piagetian concept of child development. This element was especially noticeable in item 13, children learn best through teacher-directed activities, where, within the group of first grade teachers, 36.6 percent agreed, 14.9 percent were undecided, and 44.7 percent disagreed. Sixty

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TABLE 13

Summary of Items by Response for Each Referent Group in Percentages

Item		Response	Elementary Principals	Kindergarten Teachers	First Grade Teachers	Supervisors
*2.	Children learn by interacting with people and with their environment.	MD	1.8			
		SA	76.4	82.9	67.2	69.2
		A	21.8	17.1	32.8	30.8
		U				
		D				
		SD				
		NR				
*3.	Active play does not help develop the child's understanding of the world.	MD	1.8			
		SA				
		A	9.1	1.2		
		U		1.2	3.7	
		D	38.2	28.0	35.1	38.5
		SD	50.9	68.3	59.7	61.5
		NR		1.2	1.5	
*4.	The best measure of a child's work is done with achievement tests.	MD	5.5		1.5	
		SA		1.2		
		A	3.6	2.4	4.5	
		U	12.7	2.4	4.5	
		D	56.4	39.0	44.0	76.9
		SD	21.8	53.7	44.8	23.1
		NR		1.2		
8.	Children will be likely to learn if they are given considerable choice in the selection of materials they wish to work with.	MD	1.8	1.2	1.5	
		SA	10.9	15.9	6.0	15.4
		A	54.5	53.7	53.7	69.2
		U	16.4	23.2	23.9	15.4
		D	16.4	4.9	10.4	
		SD			1.5	
		NR			3.0	
11.	Adults should make the decision as to the selection of adequate choices for children's learning.	MD	1.8	1.2	0.7	
		SA	10.9	3.7	6.0	7.7
		A	40.0	46.3	56.7	30.8
		U	10.9	14.6	15.7	7.7
		D	27.3	24.4	15.7	38.5
		SD	3.6	2.4	0.7	15.4
		NR		7.3	4.5	
*12.	Learning must be imposed upon children.	MD	3.6	1.2	1.5	
		SA		1.2	2.2	
		A	18.2	12.2	22.4	
		U	12.7	7.3	13.4	
		D	40.0	50.0	42.5	61.5
		SD	23.6	23.2	10.4	38.5
		NR	1.8		7.5	
*13.	Children learn best through teacher directed activities.	MD	3.6		2.2	
		SA	5.5	6.1	3.0	
		A	54.5	12.2	33.6	38.5
		U	7.3	11.0	14.9	
		D	25.5	56.1	41.0	53.8
		SD	3.6	8.5	3.7	7.7
		NR		6.1	1.5	

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TABLE 13 (continued)

Item		Response	Elementary Principals	Kindergarten Teachers	First Grade Teachers	Supervisors
14.	Children are not competent to make significant decisions concerning their own learning.	MD	3.6		1.5	
		SA		1.2	1.5	
		A	7.3	9.8	17.9	
		U	12.7	9.8	14.2	7.7
		D	56.4	64.6	53.0	53.8
		SD	18.2	12.2	7.5	30.8
		NR	1.8	2.4	4.5	7.7
15.	Verbal abstractions should precede direct experiences with objects and ideas.	MD	1.8	1.2		
		SA	7.3	3.7	4.5	
		A	21.8	20.7	26.1	7.7
		U	12.7	11.0	9.0	7.7
		D	38.2	35.4	38.8	38.5
		SD	18.2	23.2	14.9	46.2
		NR		4.9	6.7	
21.	Learning is best assessed through pencil and paper tests.	MD	1.8			
		SA		1.2	0.7	
		A	1.8	1.2	2.2	
		U	5.5	3.7	4.5	7.7
		D	52.7	36.6	44.0	46.2
		SD	38.2	57.3	47.8	46.2
		NR			0.7	
23.	Children will explore their environment without adult intervention.	MD	1.8			
		SA	10.9	14.6	5.2	7.7
		A	78.2	62.2	71.6	76.9
		U		8.5	6.0	
		D	7.3	12.2	15.7	15.4
		SD	1.8	1.2	0.7	
		NR		1.2	0.7	
25.	Given the opportunity, children will choose to engage in activities which will be of high interest to them.	MD	1.8		0.7	
		SA	30.9	28.0	26.9	15.4
		A	65.5	67.1	64.2	76.9
		U	1.8	1.2	0.7	7.7
		D		3.7	5.2	
		SD			1.5	
		NR			0.7	
*26.	The adult is the preferred source of verification for a child's solution to a problem.	MD	1.8	3.7	0.7	
		SA	7.3	2.4	3.7	
		A	41.8	19.5	35.8	15.4
		U	16.4	26.8	18.7	7.7
		D	18.2	32.9	32.8	69.2
		SD	7.3	6.1	1.5	7.7
		NR	7.3	8.5	6.7	
30.	Children learn and develop intellectually in their own style.	MD		3.7	6.0	
		SA	23.6	19.5	13.4	15.4
		A	72.7	65.9	74.6	69.2
		U	1.8	6.1	1.5	7.7
		D		2.4	3.7	7.7
		SD	1.8			
		NR		2.4	0.7	

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TABLE 13 (continued)

Item	Response	Elementary Principals	Kindergarten Teachers	First Grade Teachers	Supervisors
*33. Children have the competence to make significant decisions concerning their own learning.	MD		3.7	8.2	
	SA	10.9	3.7	2.2	15.4
	A	47.3	50.0	29.9	53.8
	U	12.7	22.0	24.6	15.4
	D	25.5	15.9	29.9	15.4
	SD			2.2	
	NR	3.6	4.9	3.0	
*34. Children come to understand the world through active play.	MD		6.1	6.0	
	SA	14.5	36.6	12.7	30.8
	A	65.5	46.3	69.4	69.2
	U	9.1	4.9	6.0	
	D	9.1	3.7	3.7	
	SD				
	NR	1.8	2.4	2.2	
40. Learning does not require active involvement and fun.	MD		3.7	6.0	
	SA		2.4	1.5	
	A	12.7	4.9	4.5	
	U	3.6	1.2	1.5	
	D	32.7	35.4	48.5	38.5
	SD	50.9	51.2	38.1	61.5
	NR		1.2		
41. Knowledge is acquired through abstract and hypothetical experiences followed by the concrete.	MD		3.7	6.7	
	SA	5.5	2.4	1.5	
	A	18.2	18.3	23.1	23.1
	U	9.1	11.0	17.2	
	D	38.2	32.9	27.6	23.1
	SD	25.5	23.2	20.1	53.8
	NR	3.6	8.5	3.7	
42. Making choices in the selection of materials to work with is not highly correlated with learning.	MD	1.8	3.7	6.0	
	SA			0.7	
	A	1.8	2.4	3.0	7.7
	U	10.9	11.0	11.9	7.7
	D	69.1	58.5	53.7	38.5
	SD	14.5	18.3	20.9	46.2
	NR	1.8	6.1	3.0	
43. All learning is passive.	MD		3.7	6.0	
	SA			0.7	
	A		2.4	0.7	
	U	3.6		1.5	
	D	43.6	42.7	41.8	23.1
	SD	50.9	48.8	47.0	76.9
	NR	1.8	2.4	2.2	
*47. Active exploration in a rich environment, offering a wide array of manipulative materials, will facilitate children's learning.	MD		3.7	6.0	
	SA	47.3	50.0	35.8	92.3
	A	49.1	43.9	53.7	7.7
	U	3.6		0.7	
	D		1.2	1.5	
	SD		1.2	0.7	
	NR			1.5	

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TABLE 13 (continued)

Item	Response	Elementary Principals	Kindergarten Teachers	First Grade Teachers	Supervisors
48. When a child learns something which is personally important the child prefers to keep it to him/herself.	MD		3.7	6.0	
	SA		1.2	2.2	
	A		1.2	2.2	
	U	1.8	4.9	6.0	
	D	63.6	64.6	59.0	53.8
	SD	34.5	24.4	21.6	46.2
	NR			2.2	
49. Play is not distinguished from work as the predominant mode of learning in early childhood.	MD	3.6	4.9	6.0	
	SA	9.1	17.1	8.2	7.7
	A	54.5	48.8	48.3	69.2
	U	5.5	9.8	11.9	7.7
	D	16.4	6.1	13.4	7.7
	SD	5.5	1.2	5.2	7.7
	NR	5.5	12.2	6.0	
51. Curiosity is a learned activity.	MD		3.7	6.0	
	SA	3.6	6.1	3.7	
	A	20.0	15.9	12.7	7.7
	U	3.6	8.5	3.7	7.7
	D	43.6	46.3	55.2	46.2
	SD	27.3	18.3	15.7	30.8
	NR	1.8	1.2	3.0	7.7
*52. Children learn best by listening.	MD		4.9	6.7	
	SA	3.6		3.0	
	A	9.1	2.4	8.2	
	U	3.6	4.9	3.0	
	D	47.3	58.5	59.7	53.8
	SD	36.4	24.4	18.7	46.2
	NR		4.9	0.7	

*Items which were statistically significant among referent groups.

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percent of the principals agreed with item 13, 7.3 percent were undecided, and 29.1 percent disagreed. Approximately 18 percent of the kindergarten teachers agreed while 11 percent were undecided, 64.6 percent disagreed, and 6.1 percent gave no response. A total of 38.5 percent of the supervisors agreed with item 13 and 61.5 percent disagreed. According to Howard (1964), educators practice what they believe; if this were true, this may be one example to account for the inconsistency of staff members in carrying out the developmentally appropriate curriculum outlined in the Omaha Public School's Position Paper (1985) which supports a child-centered and child-discovery approach.

Feitelson and Ross (1973) and Pellegrini (1980) examined the role of play in the kindergarten curriculum and the difficulty of defining it. The difficulty exists because of the broad usage of the term "play." Principals, first grade teachers, and even kindergarten teachers may have experienced this limitation while marking the items which dealt with play on the questionnaire. Results indicated responses on the items which focused on play (3, 34, 47, and 49) reflected a wide spread of opinion. Willert and Kamii (1985) may have mirrored the positions of many of the respondents in this study when they stated that the road that separates play advocates and academic proponents seems to grow wider and wider.

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CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It was the purpose of this study to identify a selected number of functions, goals, and purposes for schools educating kindergarten students; to determine what kindergarten teachers, first grade teachers, supervisors, and elementary principals in the Omaha Public Schools perceived to be the major purpose of kindergarten education; and, finally, to determine the extent of congruence between the four referent groups concerning the purpose of schools educating kindergarten students.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to evaluate the findings of the study:

1. No statistically significant differences exist between the other selected reference groups and elementary school principals in their perceptions of the purpose of kindergarten.

2. No statistically significant differences exist between the other selected reference groups and kindergarten teachers in their perceptions of the purpose of kindergarten.

3. No statistically significant differences exist between the other selected reference groups and first grade teachers in their perceptions of the purpose of kindergarten.

4. No statistically significant differences exist between the other selected reference groups and supervisors in their

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perceptions of the purpose of kindergarten.

Methods and Procedures

Two hundred and eighty-four respondents, consisting of 82 kindergarten teachers, 134 first grade teachers, 13 supervisors, and 55 elementary principals, completed a 52-item questionnaire. Twenty-five of the questionnaire items were identified in two previous studies as highly discriminating in determining what teachers and administrators perceived to be the major purposes and goals for educating kindergarteners. Questionnaires were coded upon their return to reflect role, sex, age, educational background, early childhood education, and marital status of respondents. The chi-square, z test, factor analysis, and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences made up the statistical procedures used to analyze the data. A five percent level of confidence was used to determine acceptance or rejection of the null hypotheses.

Findings

Significant differences existed between the following groups:

1. There were significant differences between the perceptions of elementary principals and kindergarten teachers. Scores from the z statistic of 2.69 on item 3, 2.70 on item 34, 5.47 on item 13, and 3.58 on item 4 reflected significant differences at <1.96.

2. Significant differences existed between elementary principals and first grade teachers. The z statistic was statistically significant for item 52 (2.10), item 3 (2.21), item 13 (2.73), and

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item 4 (2.70).

3. Significant differences existed between elementary principals and supervisors, according to the z statistic, on item 52 (2.10), item 34 (2.75), item 47 (4.45), item 26 (2.51), item 12 (3.35), item 13 (2.16), and item 4 (2.16).

4. Significant differences existed between kindergarten teachers and first grade teachers. Scores from the z statistic of 2.27 on item 52, 2.48 on item 2, 2.24 on item 12, and 3.68 on item 13 reflected statistically significant differences.

5. Significant differences existed between kindergarten teachers and supervisors, according to the z statistic, on item 52 (2.12), item 47 (3.61), and item 12 (2.41).

6. There were significant differences in the perceptions of first grade teachers and supervisors. A score of 4.35 on item 52, 5.16 on item 47, 2.25 on item 26, and 4.62 on item 12 reflected statistically significant differences when the z statistic was utilized.

Discussion

A major methodological limitation in the study was the use of a single page questionnaire which had printed questions on the front and back. The category of MD (missing data) noted in some of the tables may have been a direct result of respondents only marking one side of the questionnaire. A reminder in the directions to turn the questionnaire over or the use of the word "continued" on the bottom of the first page of the questionnaire would have alerted the respondent to complete the other side.

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Since this study did not focus on whether or not the perceptions shared by the respondents pointed toward a developmentally appropriate kindergarten or one directed toward academic preparation, these questions could not be answered in this study. However, the information garnered from specific items of the questionnaire did produce important data in regard to those perceptions held by supervisors, elementary principals, kindergarten teachers, and first grade teachers regarding this issue.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The chi-square, a statistical test for variance, and the z test showed significant differences existed between elementary principals, kindergarten teachers, first grade teachers, and supervisors in their perceptions of the purpose of kindergarten.

2. There were more significant differences on the items of the questionnaire between elementary principals and supervisors than between elementary principals and the other referent groups.

3. Congruence seemed to be greater among kindergarten teachers, first grade teachers, and supervisors in their perceptions of the purpose of kindergarten than among kindergarten teachers, first grade teachers, supervisors, and elementary principals.

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Implications

1. Working with principals in inservice programs regarding the education of young children and the purpose of kindergarten could be the single most important factor in implementing the position statements regarding developmentally appropriate kindergartens on both the state and district level.

2. The degree of professional preparation in early childhood education may have had a direct correlation to the responses given by the respondents.

3. First grade teachers and kindergarten teachers may be in closer accord regarding the purpose of kindergarten than assumed prior to the study. Teachers at these age levels tend to be closer in philosophical beliefs than implementation practices.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations are made for further study:

1. An examination should be conducted concerning the relationship of early childhood education to the educators' perceptions regarding the purpose of education.

2. The actual application of early childhood practices in kindergartens by those educators with early childhood education degrees and/or certification should be investigated and compared.

3. A study to answer the question of whether or not school-based inservice programs for kindergarten teachers and elementary

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principals regarding how young children learn can influence or move an academic-oriented kindergarten toward a developmentally appropriate model in kindergarten should be conducted.

4. Further research should be conducted on a longitudinal basis to examine the impact of developmentally appropriate kindergarten programs on the success of first graders.

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REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A

Letter of Permission to Conduct the Research and Distribute the Questionnaire

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OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DEPARTMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES

May 20, 1986

Joyce Buckner
Director of Elementary Education

Dear Mrs. Buckner,

Permission is hereby given for you to pursue a study of the Kindergarten Program in the Omaha Public Schools. As I understand your request, it is to administer a questionnaire to all kindergarten and first grade teachers, elementary supervisors, and elementary principals to ascertain their perception of the purpose/function of the Kindergarten Program as they perceive it. Completion of the instrument will require approximately 25 minutes.

No experimental control groups of treatment of children is involved in this study.

We look forward to utilizing the data obtained in your study. Please let me know if I can be of any further help to you in this important endeavor.

Sincerely,

Joe Gaughan

Joseph Gaughan
Assistant Superintendent
Instruction and Special Education
Services

c: Irv Young, Research

3902 DAVENPORT STREET OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68131 (402) 554-6200

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APPENDIX B

Basic Assumption Inventory and Letter of Permission for Use

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SA - Strongly agree
A - Agree
U - Undecided
D - Disagree
SD - Strongly Disagree
NR - No Response

---

1. Growth, development and learning constitute interdependent and continuing processes.
   (SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

2. Children learn by interacting with people and with their environment.
   (SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

3. Active play does not help develop the child's understanding of the world.
   (SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

4. The best measure of a child's work is done with achievement tests.
   (SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

5. Children have the right to make significant decisions concerning their own learning.
   (SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

6. Confidence in self is highly related to making important choices affecting one's learning.
   (SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

7. When a child learns something which is personally important, the child will wish to share it with others.
   (SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

8. Children will be likely to learn if they are given considerable choice in the selection of materials they wish to work with.
   (SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

9. Only the adult has the right to make significant decisions concerning the child's learning.
   (SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

10. Each child has a personal interest, rate, and time for learning.
    (SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

11. Adults should make the decision as to the selection of adequate choices for children's learning.
    (SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

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SA - Strongly Agree U - Undecided SD - Strongly Disagree
A - Agree D - Disagree NR - No response

12. Learning must be imposed upon children.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

13. Children learn best through teacher directed activities.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

14. Children are not competent to make significant decisions concerning their learning.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

15. Verbal abstractions should precede direct experiences with objects and ideas.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

16. Making choices affecting one's learning is not highly related to confidence in self.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

17. Children are innately curious.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

18. Children pass through similar stages of intellectual development, each in their own way and at their own rate and in their own time.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

19. The ultimate purpose of education is the acquisition of knowledge.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

20. There is a universal style of learning for all children.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

21. Learning is best assessed through paper and pencil tests.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

22. The ultimate purpose of education is three-fold, to learn how to learn, to learn how to make choices, and to learn how to relate.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

23. Children will explore their environment without adult intervention.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

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SA - Strongly Agree	U - Undecided	SD - Strongly Disagree
A - Agree	D - Disagree	NR - No response

24. The most important aspects of a person's learning can be carefully measured.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

25. Given the opportunity, children will choose to engage in activities which will be of high interest to them.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

26. The adult is the preferred source of verification for a child's solution to a problem.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

27. Growth, development and learning constitute independent processes.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

28. Play and work are distinctively different as modes of learning in early childhood.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

29. A capacity for learning is separate from confidence in self.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

30. Children learn and develop intellectually in their own style.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

31. Those qualities of a person's learning which can be carefully measured are not necessarily the most important.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

32. Knowledge is a function of one's personal integration of experience and therefore does not fall into neatly separated categories or "disciplines."
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

33. Children have the competence to make significant decisions concerning their own learning.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

34. Children come to understand the world through active play.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

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SA - Strongly Agree U - Undecided SD - Strongly Disagree
A - Agree D - Disagree NR - No response

35. The child will display natural exploratory behavior if he is not threatened.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

36. Children learn and develop intellectually at their own rate.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

37. Confidence in self is highly related to capacity for learning.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

38. The final test of an education is what a person <u>is</u>.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

39. Exploratory behavior is self perpetuating.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

40. Learning does not require active involvement and fun.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

41. Knowledge is acquired through abstract and hypothetical experiences followed by the concrete.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

42. Making choices in the selection of materials to work with is not highly correlated with learning.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

43. All learning is passive.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

44. Failure, rejection and shame will help the unmotivated child to display exploratory behavior.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

45. The final test of an eduction is what a person <u>knows</u>.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

46. Knowledge can be divided into separate categories or "disciplines."
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

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SA - Strongly Agree	U - Undecided	SD - Strongly Disagree
A - Agree	D - Disagree	NR - No response

47. Active exploration in a rich environment, offering a wide array of manipulative materials, will facilitate children's learning.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

48. When a child learns something which is personally important the child prefers to keep it to him/herself.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

49. Play is not distinguished from work as the predominant mode of learning in early childhood.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

50. Children can be expected to be interested in the same thing at the same moment and for the same length of time.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

51. Curiosity is a learned activity.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

52. Children learn best by listening.
(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

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Bobbie H. Rowland

317 Rosemary Lane
Gastonia, N.C. 28052
(704) 864-2839

September 30, 1986

Joyce Buckner
Director of Elementary Education
Omaha Public Schools
3902 Davenport Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68131

Dear Ms. Buckner:

The purpose of this letter is grant you permission to use my Basic Assumption Inventory in your research and for your dissertation.

I regret it has taken me so long to respond to your letter. It had to take a few side trips before it go to me.

Let me know your results. I am a Professor of Child and Family Development, University of North Carolina at Charlotte (Telephone (704) 547-2171) if you have any questions.

Please reference the following way:

Rowland, B. H. (1983). Basic Assumption Inventory, Cited in A Study of North Carolina Kindergartens and First Grades, North Carolina Association for the Education of Young Children. Used with permission.

Good luck in your work.

Sincerely,

Bobbie H. Rowland

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APPENDIX C

Personal Data Sheet for Classroom Teachers

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CLASSROOM TEACHER

To assist us in learning more about you, we ask that you answer the following questions about yourself. Remmeber, this information is for statistical analysis only. All responses are confidential.

1. What is your age grouping?

____ UNDER 20 YEARS OLD	____ 31-35 YEARS OLD
____ 20-25 YEARS OLD	____ 36-50 YEARS OLD
____ 26-30 YEARS OLD	____ OVER 40 YEARS OLD

2. What is your sex? ____MALE ____FEMALE

3. What is your educational background?

____HAVE UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE PLUS GRADUATE HOURS
____HAVE GRADUATE LEVEL EDUCATION (MASTER'S DEGREE)
____HAVE ADVANCED LEVEL EDUCATION (DOCTORATE)

4. ____HAVE ____ HOURS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
____HAVE UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
____HAVE GRADUATE LEVEL DEGREE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

5. What type certification do you have?

_____

6. How many years have you been teaching? _____

7. Do you presently teach kindergarten or first grade?

____ KINDERGARTEN ____ FIRST GRADE

8. What is your present marital status?

____SINGLE ____MARRIED ____SEPARATED ____DIVORCED

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION! IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS AS TO HOW THE RESPONSES TO THIS QUESTIONNAIRE WILL BE USED WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN EXPLAINED IN THE INTRODUCTORY LETTER, PLEASE WRITE TO:

Joyce Buckner
Director of Elementary Education

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APPENDIX D

Personal Data Sheet for Administrators

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ADMINISTRATOR

To assist us in learning more about you, we ask that you answer the following questions about yourself. Remember, this information is for statistical analysis only. All responses are confidential.

1. What is your age grouping?

____ UNDER 20 YEARS OLD
____ 20-25 YEARS OLD
____ 26-30 YEARA OLD
____ 31-35 YEARS OLD
____ 36-40 YEARS OLD
____ OVER 40 YEARS OLD

2. What is your sex? ____MALE ____FEMALE

3. What is your educational background?

____ HAVE UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE PLUS GRADUATE HOURS
____ HAVE GRADUATE LEVEL EDUCATION (MASTER'S DEGREE)
____ HAVE ADVANCED LEVEL EDUCATION (DOCTORATE)

4. ____ HAVE ____ HOURS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
____ HAVE UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
____ HAVE GRADUATE LEVEL DEGREE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

5. What is your present marital status?

____ SINGLE ____MARRIED ____ SEPARATED ____DIVORCED

6. How long have you been employed as a school administrator?

____ YEARS ____MONTHS

7. How long have you been the school administrator as your current school?

____ YEARS ____MONTHS

8. Prior to becoming a school administrator, in what occupation were you employed?

_____

____HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION! IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS AS TO HOW THE RESPONSES TO THIS QUESTIONNAIRE WILL BE USED WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN EXPLAINED IN THE INTRODUCTORY LETTER, PLEASE WRITE TO:

Joyce Buckner
Director of Elementary Education

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APPENDIX E

Direction Sheet

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BASIC ASSUMPTION INVENTORY

DIRECTIONS

This inventory consists of fifty-two (52) statements to assess your assumptions concerning children's learning and knowledge. The following statements represent assumptions held by many persons. There is disagreement, so there are no right or wrong answers.

Read each statement carefully and select the phrase that best expresses YOUR assumption about the statement. Then mark your answer. Please answer every statement.

If you STRONGLY AGREE, circle space "SA."

If you AGREE, circle space "A."

If you are UNDECIDED, circle space "U."

If you DISAGREE, circle space "D."

If you STRONGLY DISAGREE, circle space "SD."

If you have NO RESPONSE, circle space "NR."

For example:

All apples are good.

(SA) (A) (U) (D) (SD) (NR)

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APPENDIX F

Cover Letter for Administrators

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OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DEPARTMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES

September 2, 1986

Dear Administrator,

The importance of a strong foundation in the early years is becoming absolutely essential. More and more educators are being called upon to examine the impact of early childhood programs on the lives of our young children.

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions held by staff regarding the purposes and function of the kindergarten program as they translate into practice in the Omaha Public Schools.

The Department of Instruction will establish a committee in the fall of 1986 to study the kindergarten program in the Omaha Public Schools. Information gathered via this instrument will provide valuable data regarding the instructional practices and perception of the kindergarten classroom as perceived by teachers in kindergarten and first grade, elementary supervisors, and elementary principals.

Your responses will be held in the strictest confidence. A number will be assigned to your sheet in order to make sure we have received a return of the questionnaire from each respondent. It will also aid us in sending out reminders to those who have inadvertently forgotten to return the questionnaire.

Please complete the questionnaire and return it in the enclosed pre-addressed envelope. Drop the envelope in the school mail by September 16, 1986.

The results of the survey will be made available via the Instruction Department newsletter, The Prompter, in October. Thank you so much for your time and effort in this project.

Sincerely,

Joyce Buckner

Joyce Buckner
Director of Elementary Education

25/16

3902 DAVENPORT STREET OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68131 (402) 554-6260

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APPENDIX G

Cover Letter for Classroom Teachers

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OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DEPARTMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES

September 2, 1986

Dear Classroom Teacher,

The importance of a strong foundation in the early years is becoming absolutely essential. More and more educators are being called upon to examine the impact of early childhood programs on the lives of our young children.

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions held by staff regarding the purposes and function of the kindergarten program as they translate into practice in the Omaha Public Schools.

The Department of Instruction will establish a committee in the fall of 1986 to study the kindergarten program in the Omaha Public Schools. Information gathered via this instrument will provide valuable data regarding the instructional practices and perception of the kindergarten classroom as perceived by teachers in kindergarten and first grade, elementary supervisors, and elementary principals.

Your responses will be held in the strictest confidence. A number will be assigned to your sheet in order to make sure we have received a return of the questionnaire from each respondent. It will also aid us in sending out reminders to those who have inadvertently forgotten to return the questionnaire.

Please complete the questionnaire and return it in the enclosed pre-addressed envelope. Drop the envelope in the school mail by September 16, 1986.

The results of the survey will be made available via the Instruction Department newsletter, The Prompter, in October. Thank you so much for your time and effort in this project.

Sincerely,

Joyce Buckner

Joyce Buckner
Director of Elementary Education

25/16

3902 DAVENPORT STREET OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68131 (402) 554-6260

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APPENDIX H

Reminder Letter to Respondents to Return the Questionnaire

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OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Department of Instruction and Special Education

September 18, 1986

OOPS! DID YOU FORGET ? ! ? ! ?

Hi!

I know how busy you've been, but your input is imperative as we try to set a course for the Kindergarten Program in the Omaha Public Schools. Won't you please take a few minutes to answer and return the questionnaire you received?

Just in case you've misplaced it, here's another one. Your opinion is important. Please return it as soon as possible so that we can include your input into the decision making process.

Thanks.

/s/ Joyce Buckner

Joyce Buckner
Director of Elementary Education

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